

NAVIGATING BETWEEN FOUR

# GENERATIONS

IN THE WORKPLACE

Many offices currently have a mix of four generational cohorts under their employ, namely Traditionalists (or Silents), Baby Boomers (or Me Generation), Generation X (commonly abbreviated as GenX), and Millennials (or Generation Y). Each has different values and approaches to the workplace, outlined below:

	 <b>Traditionalists</b> Born between 1922 - 1945*, this generation is influenced by the Great Depression and World War II	 <b>Baby Boomers</b> Born between 1945 - 1965*, this generation is shaped by the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam, and the space race	 <b>Generation X</b> Born between 1966 - 1979*, this generation is self-reliant, comfortable with change, and seeks continuous learning	 <b>Millennials</b> Born between 1980 - 1999*, this generation is innately comfortable with technology, adaptable, and open to change
 <b>Work Ethic</b>	Disciplined and process-oriented, with a strong sense of obligation	Possesses a strong sense of personal worth and value, and are determined to work hard and succeed	Results-oriented and seek to get the job done correctly, but value flexibility to complete tasks when and where they want	The most highly-educated generation, utilizing a strong comfort with technology to achieve end results in a different way
 <b>Loyalty</b>	Content to “pay their dues”, and remain very loyal to employers	Typically career-focused, and loyal to their employers	More likely to seek continuous learning opportunities, and are not overtly loyal to employers	Commonly thought to be less loyal to employers, but fiercely loyal to ideas, causes, or products they believe in
 <b>Authority</b>	Embrace a formal approach in the workplace, respect authority and heirarchy, and resist disruption to “business as usual”	Respects authority, but encouraged by the social turmoil of their time to challenge leaders and seek to replace them	Taught to question authority, but this is viewed as a natural extension of communication and is not equated with disrespect	Questioning of authority and feel that respect must be earned, and not simply given based on an authoritative position
 <b>Work/Life Balance</b>	Career-oriented, and have been willing to put in long hours to complete tasks and succeed in the workforce	Very career-oriented; a generational challenge is a lack of work/life balance	Determined to do a good job, but not at the cost of their personal lives, valuing flexible schedules, even if that means making less money	Value job flexibility to work outside the traditional work schedule and enjoy balanced work and personal time

Considering the differences between the generations regarding values and approaches to the workplace, there are a number of practices that can be implemented in order to help members of each generation feel comfortable, accepted, and respected in the workplace:

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Adapt and shift leadership styles to fit the needs of each employee
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Clear, effective communication is critical; overcommunication is key to success
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Address the training needs and differences of learning style between the generations
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Help employees feel valued, and respect their desire for work/life balance
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Be honest with coworkers, superiors, and subordinates
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Ask questions to ensure that ideas and viewpoints presented are heard and understood
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Adapt to change, new technology, customer needs, and ways of doing business
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Avoid stereotyping others and assuming that differences of opinion are due to age differences
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Focus on the common goals of the team, regardless of age range
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Realize there are always opportunities to learn and improve